

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "Swine Flu: Coordinating the Federal Response."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, to conduct a hearing entitled "Nominations" on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at 2 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 29, 2009. The Committee will meet in room 562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND DRUGS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, to conduct a hearing entitled "Restoring Fairness to Federal Sentencing: Addressing the Crack-Powder Disparity" on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, "The Federal Government's Role in Empowering Americans to Make Informed Financial Decisions."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 29, 2009 from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. in Dirksen 106 for the purpose of conducting a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT
AGREEMENT—S. 896

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Thursday, April 30, following a period of morning business, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 52, S. 896, Helping Families Saves Their Homes; that immediately after the bill is reported, Senator DURBIN be recognized to offer an amendment relating to "cram-down"—that is, bankruptcy; that there be 4 hours for debate with respect to the amendment and the time be equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to that amendment; that adoption of the amendment will require an affirmative 60-vote threshold; that if the threshold is achieved, the amendment be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that if the amendment does not achieve that threshold, that it will be withdrawn; provided further that no amendment be in order to the amendment and that no further amendments on the subject of "cram-down" be in order during the pendency of S. 896; further, that upon disposition of the Durbin amendment, Senator DODD be recognized to offer a Dodd-Shelby substitute amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before we move on, there are times in the legislative process that you see someone who has invested a great deal of their personal time and passion on an issue. I came to Congress at the same time that Senator DURBIN of Illinois came. He is a man, we all know, who is very articulate. He is a person who can express himself very well. He is a person who believes in the legislative process. He understands that legislation is the art of compromise. But that can be carried a little too far.

Senator DURBIN has done everything within his power to get an issue that he believes in very strongly. I agree with him. It is unbelievable to me that people can have their primary residence in Las Vegas and have a beach house in Laguna, CA, and a ski chalet in Brian Head, UT, or some other ski area in Utah, and they come upon hard times. The resorts they have at the beach and up in the mountains, they can go to bankruptcy court and get that readjusted. Their primary residence, they

cannot. But a person who has a home in Las Vegas or some other place in Nevada who comes upon hard times, they cannot do a thing with their home. They cannot go to bankruptcy court. They are stuck with this horrible process, we found.

I do not know how to summarize this other than to say that I hope the banks are proud of themselves. I hope they are proud of themselves, of what they have done—I add in that the financial institutions generally—what they have done to our country. And now they are standing in the way of our trying to help a little bit, trying to help people who have a home and they cannot get any relief. So the banks are going to wind up with a lot of peoples' homes because they are going to foreclosure upon them and the people have no alternative.

On the morning news today, Phoenix, AZ, the price of the homes in the last year—at least the way I heard it on public radio today—the price of homes has dropped 50 percent. A home that was worth \$500,000 last year is worth \$250,000 now.

Everyone knows that the assistant leader of the Senate is Senator DURBIN. We work very closely together. And I help him whenever I can, as he helps me whenever he can. But I feel badly for the country. I am happy we got this agreement. Maybe we will be able to get very fortunate and pick up some votes. But I am very disappointed in the rope-a-dope that has been used on Senator DURBIN. He has tried everything—everything—to try to get this done. Quite frankly, the amendment he is going to offer, I wish we would have one a little stronger than that.

But I hope that there will be a night's rest and people will come in and say: I guess DURBIN is right. Let's do this. But I want the record spread with the fact that the people of the State of Illinois are very fortunate to have someone of his caliber, his integrity, working to help them and in the process help our country.

I ask unanimous consent that on Thursday, April 30, upon disposition—Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that on Thursday, April 30, upon disposition of the Durbin amendment and after Senator DODD has called up his amendment, that has been previously worked out, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 56, the nomination of Thomas

Strickland to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife; that there be 3 hours of debate with respect to the nomination, with 1 hour under the control of the majority and 2 hours under the control of the Republicans and 30 minutes of the Republican time under the control of Senator BUNNING; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the nomination; that the confirmation require an affirmative 60-vote threshold; that upon achieving that threshold, the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, there be no further motions in order, and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

So after we dispose of the Durbin amendment, we will move to the Dodd amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to express my appreciation to Senator BUNNING who has been very reasonable in this process. There are certain things he wanted. He didn't get what he felt he was entitled to. Looking at his request, I think it was very reasonable. Senator BUNNING has not been unfair in the questions he asked. I appreciate his allowing us to get this consent agreement.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, and all nominations on the Secretary's Desk in the Coast Guard; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, and the motions to reconsider be laid on the table en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

April S. Boyd, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Robert S. Rivkin, of Illinois, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation.

Roy W. Kienitz, of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy.

Peter H. Appel, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Department of Transportation.

Dana G. Gresham, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

Joseph C. Szabo, of Illinois, to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Sherburne B. Abbott, of Texas, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officer for appointment as Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under Title 14, U.S.C., Section 47:

To be vice admiral

Vice Adm. David P. Pekoske

The following named officer for appointment as Chief of Staff of the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under Title 14, U.S.C., Section 50a:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. John P. Currier

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 271:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Robert E. Day, Jr.

The following named officer for appointment as Commander, Pacific Area of the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under Title 14, U.S.C., Section 50:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Jody A. Breckenridge

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE COAST GUARD

PN190 COAST GUARD nomination of Michael J. McNeil, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 17, 2009.

PN191 COAST GUARD nomination of Desarae A. Janszen, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 17, 2009.

NOMINATION OF RONALD H. WEICH TO BE AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. REID. I now ask that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 65.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The nomination will be stated.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ronald H. Weich, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the Senate considers another of President Obama's highly-qualified nominees for an important post in the executive branch. Earlier today, the Judiciary Committee reported favorably the nomination of Ron Weich to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legislative Affairs at the Department of Justice. I had hoped that we could expedite this nomination before the recess so that Mr. Weich could begin doing his job for the American people, but lack of cooperation from the Republican side prevented us from confirming the nomination then. I am pleased that with cooperation today, we will confirm Mr. Weich.

In more than a decade on Capitol Hill, Ron Weich has advised three Senators: Senator SPECTER, Senator KENNEDY, and now Majority Leader REID, who introduced Mr. Weich at his hearing 3 weeks ago and strongly recommended his confirmation.

At his hearing, I put into the record a letter from Senator KENNEDY describing Mr. Weich as a "lawyer of exceptional intelligence, skill, and sound

judgment" and praising his "remarkable ability . . . to work extremely well with Members and staff on both sides of the aisle and to guide us toward creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems." Many of Mr. Weich's former Republican colleagues wrote to this committee to attest to the fact that he is highly regarded among both Republican and Democratic staff, and they spoke of his "respect for opposing views" and his "constructive approach to difficult legal issues." They described him as "honorable and trustworthy." And of course, Mr. Weich is equally well-respected outside of this chamber. A letter from the Fraternal Order of Police highlights his "long and sterling career as a public safety policymaker" and notes that he is "a passionate champion for justice."

In addition, Mr. Weich has a distinguished record of public service as an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, and as a special counsel to the United States Sentencing Commission. He is an experienced Senate hand who has earned the respect of Senators on both sides of the aisle. We know him well as a former member of the staff of the Judiciary Committee. I am confident he will be a welcome addition to the leadership at the Justice Department, and will make the Department more responsive to congressional concerns than we have seen over the last several years.

I congratulate Mr. Weich and his family on his confirmation today and look forward to working with him in his new capacity at the Justice Department.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Ronald H. Weich, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be laid on the table and there be no further motions in order; that any statements relating to this nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

CONFIRMATION OF RON WEICH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before I turn this over to Senator DURBIN to close, I want to say a word or two about this nomination we just completed. That is the nomination of Ron Weich.

I know Ron has waited with his family for a long time to get this done, but I have tremendously mixed emotions. A part of me was saying: I wish maybe